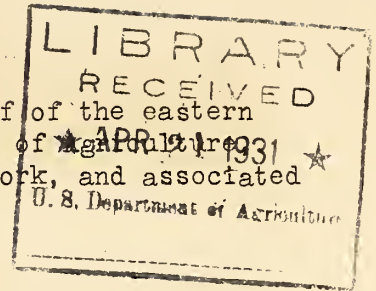


## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



April 13, 1931



A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, chief of the eastern district, Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Monday mornings at 10 A.M., through WJZ, New York, and associated National Broadcasting Company stations.

Good morning, my radio friends, your representative of the Federal Food and Drug Administration comes to you this morning for the fiftieth time to tell you how your foods and drugs are safeguarded by the enforcement of the Federal food and drugs act, and to tell you how to read labels, in order that you may become careful, exacting, discriminating, and economical buyers.

My story today concerns a conscienceless peach canner. The American canning industry is more highly and more scientifically developed than any canning industry elsewhere in the world. The vast majority of food canners in the United States are ever mindful of their obligations to pack wholesome, sound canned-food products, and American canned foods are the best in the world. But there are a few food canners who need watching and it falls to your food and drug inspectors to watch them. A few years ago, a Federal inspector made a visit to a small peach-canning establishment. The inspector found on hand a large stock of cull ripe peaches in very poor condition. The peaches were undergoing decomposition. In order to try to save them, the canner was making a reassortment, picking out the best of the culls for shipment in baskets, and the peaches which remained for canning were very sorry indeed. They were largely rotten and wormy. You would suppose that the operator would have employed the greatest care in sorting and trimming when preparing such raw material for canning, but your inspector found it otherwise. These rotten and wormy peaches were pitted and packed in cans without sorting, without trimming, without even washing, so urgent was the rush to get the accumulated surplus of material into the cans and processed before it spoiled altogether. The inspector told the manager of the plant that he was a representative of the Food and Drug Administration and pointed out that the peaches were unfit for use, and recommended that they not be sold. A little later the canner shipped this lot of canned peaches, consisting of 179 cases, or more than 4,000 cans. The inspector knew of the shipment one hour after the goods were delivered to the railroad. He immediately proceeded to the point to which shipment was made and collected samples from the lot. Examination of the samples confirmed that the product was largely filthy, rotten, and wormy. These facts were reported to a United States court and the judge ordered the property seized. At the trial before a court and jury, no claimant having appeared for the property, a verdict for the Government was returned and thereupon the court signed a decree of forfeiture and condemnation. The peaches were destroyed. It is, my friends, by action such as this that the enforcement of the Federal food and drugs act protects your food and drug supply.

My read-the-label subject today is canned fruit. Canned fruits are usually packed in No. 1, No. 2, No. 2-1/2 and No. 10 cans. These numbers do not mean that the cans contain so many pounds. Instead, normally, a No. 1 can of fruit contains about 10 ozs., a No. 2 can about

1 lb. 4 ozs., a No. 2-1/2 can about 1 lb. 13 ozs., and a No. 10 can about 6 lbs. 4 ozs., Read labels for quantity-of-contents statement. Do not accept a No. 2 can when you wish a No. 2-1/2 can, nor permit yourself to be charged the price of a no. 2-1/2 can when you are delivered a No. 2 can.

When comparing net-weight declarations on various brands of canned fruit, remember that heavy sirup weighs more than light sirup or water, volume for volume, hence canned fruit packed in heavy sirup will show, for the same size can, a net-weight declaration an ounce or so greater than will fruit packed in light sirup or water.

The canning medium generally used for fruits is sugar sirup, though some grades are packed in water. Various strengths of sugar sirup are employed in canning, that is sirup with varying amounts of sugar in solution. Naturally, a heavy sirup contains more sugar and is more expensive than light sirup. Moreover, heavy sirup is generally employed only in the very highest grades, successive lower grades containing successively lesser strength sugar sirup. To describe the various canned-fruit-packing mediums, the terms, "Heavy Sirup", "Medium Sirup", "Light Sirup", and "Water-Packed" are used, and these terms often appear on labels. The amount of sugar indicated by these designations varies according to the nature of the fruit. Heavy sirup contains from 40 to 70 per cent sugar by weight. Medium sirup runs about 30 to 40 per cent sugar, and light sirup from 10 to 25 per cent sugar. Of course, "Water-Packed" means packed in water without any sugar. Labels on canned fruit sometimes state the character of the packing medium, and the grade designations of the fruit, when given, also indicate the strength of the sirup. For example, in California "Fancy" canned apricots, peaches, and plums are packed in 55% sugar sirup - "Choice" grades in 40% sugar sirup - "Standard" grades in 25% sugar sirup - and "Seconds" are packed either in 10% sugar sirup or in water.

The term, "Pic" fruit - for example, "Pic Peaches" - is sometimes used to describe "Seconds". Pic fruit is usually packed in water. In other canned fruits, such as pears or cherries, slightly lower strength sugar solutions than for apricots, peaches, and plums are used, but the same commercial grade designations apply. And so, my friends, you must read labels to determine the character of the packing medium in the canned fruit you buy.

I have referred to commercial grade names as applied to canned fruit. I wish I could tell you that there is a way to determine relative grades by reading the label, but commercial grade designations are not in general use on labels. Moreover, commercial grades are not very exact. It is often difficult, even for experts, to determine the precise difference between the poorer qualities of one grade and the better qualities of the next lower grade. Therefore, while some labels bear commercial grade designations, these do not at present serve as entirely exact indices of relative quality. You are soon to be furnished a means of determining, on the label, the differences between canned food products that meet an established standard and those that do not. You will recall that I talked to you some weeks ago about a recently passed amendment to the food and drugs act. This law, known as the Mapes Bill,



authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a United States standard of quality and condition for each of the various generic classes of canned foods, except canned milk and such canned meat products as are subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act. It also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to prescribe the extent to which the container must be filled with canned food. All canned foods not meeting the established standard or fill of can are required to be labeled to show the fact. Standards, as authorized by the Mapes Bill, were on February 16, 1931, announced for canned peaches and pears. These standards will become effective 90 days from that date. The Secretary of Agriculture has decided on a legend that all canned foods which do not meet the standards as promulgated must bear. The legend must be placed in immediate conjunction with the name of the product. It reads: "Below U. S. Standard, Low Quality but Not Illegal", and this must be surrounded by a box border to make it conspicuous. The Secretary of Agriculture has also ruled that if the entire food content occupies less than 90 per cent of the volume of the closed container, then the label must bear the words, "Slack Filled", immediately preceding the name of the product. The standard which has been prescribed for canned peaches is as follows: "Canned Peaches is a normally flavored and normally colored product consisting of normal, uniform sized, tender, peeled, mature, unblemished, pitted, unbroken halves of peaches and sugar solution containing sufficient sugar so that the sirup draining from the finished product contains not less than 14 per cent sugar by weight. The definition further prescribes that the amount of fruit in the container shall not be less than two-thirds the weight of the amount of water which the sealed container will hold, and that the unit halves cannot be smaller than three-fourths of an ounce and they must be uniform within slight variations. A definite standard degree of tenderness is also provided. Slight allowance is permitted for imperfect peeling, blemishes, broken pieces, and excessive trimming. All canned peaches packed after May 17, 1931, not meeting the requirements of the standard must be labeled, "Below U. S. Standard - Low Quality but Not Illegal". The definitions provide for the minimum standard pack of peaches to contain 14 per cent sugar sirup. If peaches, otherwise standard, are packed in water, they will not need to be labeled, "below U. S. standard", if they are labeled "Water-Packed Peaches". Canned whole, quartered, or sliced peaches, when standard in all other respects, will not need to be labeled "below U. S. standard", if they are labeled, "whole peaches", or, "quarter peaches", or "sliced peaches", as the case may be. The definition for standard canned peaches provides for a yellow color, but any lot of otherwise standard canned white peaches will not be required to be labeled as "below U. S. standard" if they are labeled "white peaches". The definition requires a degree of perfection of physical condition and excludes frayed edges, known as raggedness, which is often a normal characteristic for freestone peaches. Therefore, canned freestone peaches which have frayed edges will <sup>not</sup> need to bear the "below U. S. standard" legend, because of raggedness alone, if they are labeled as "freestone peaches".

Canned pears are described as normally flavored and normally colored canned food consisting of normal, uniform, tender, peeled, mature,

unblemished, unbroken halves of pears from which the calyx end and seed cells have been removed, with or without removal of the internal stem, packed in sugar solution of sufficient strength so that the sirup drained from the finished product contains not less than 13% sugar by weight. The description of the meaning of the terms and requirements are essentially the same as those provided under the definition for standard canned peaches, and canned pears not meeting the standard must be marked plainly and conspicuously with the statement, "Below U. S. Standard - Low Quality but Not Illegal". Canned pears which are otherwise in compliance with the standard, but which are packed in water, do not need to be marked with the low-quality statement if they are labeled as, "water-packed pears". Whole or quartered pears, otherwise of standard quality, do not need to be labeled as "below U. S. Standard", if labeled, "whole pears" or "quartered pears". It is important for you to know that canned pears of a type where gritty portions are a normal characteristic, like Kieffer pears, need not bear the low-quality legend because of grittiness alone if labeled to show the particular type to which they belong.

And so, my friends, when the next season's pack of canned peaches and canned pears come on the market, read labels, and if you do not see the legend "Below U. S. Standard", then you will know that the product at least meets the U. S. Standard. You may encounter terms like "water-packed", "white peaches", "freestone peaches", or "quartered pears" and you will know the significance of these terms on labels.

Lest you misunderstand, let me impress upon you the fact that the Mapes Bill does not provide for the establishment of grades for canned foods. It authorizes a single standard for each generic class of foods. This standard is not to be so exacting as to admit only products of the highest excellence. Instead, the standard established in each case will be broad enough in its definitions of quality and condition to include all products which may be legally marketed without being designated as "Below U. S. Standard". Most canned foods will meet the standard. When they do they will not be required to be branded with a statement of that fact. The branding requirement is applicable only to products failing to meet the standard. I anticipate, however, that packers manufacturing products meeting the standard will voluntarily brand their goods in some way to indicate their conformity with the standard, and if they do, then, of course, any such label statements must under the food and drugs act be true.

There are a large number of varieties of peaches used for canning. Eighty-five per cent to 90 per cent of the peaches canned in California are the yellow clingstone varieties. The Phillips Cling, the Tuscan Cling and the Nichols Orange Cling are some of the most popular. The Muir, Yellow Crawford and Lovel are the most important freestone varieties. In the East, the Elberta, a freestone peach, is frequently employed for canning purposes.

In the case of apricots, some of the principal varieties canned are Blenheim, Royal and Moorpack. In the case of pears, Bartlett and Kieffer. In the case of plums, Green Gage, Washington, and Egg. Sometimes labels declare the variety of the fruit in the can. When this is true, you can determine whether you are getting what you wish.

Now, my friends, let me urge you to read labels, to read labels intelligently, and to be sure that you are given the product you wish to buy. I am declaring, Mrs. Housewife, that it is to your advantage to employ the keenest discrimination in making your purchases, and to bring to bear the fullest information that you can get, if you are to become discriminating, careful, and economical buyers. You may easily become discriminating buyers if you will study my read-the-label broadcasts, and copies of all of my talks will be sent to you on request.

Write to W. R. M. WHARTON, United States Department of Agriculture, 201 Varick Street, New York City.

